Montgomery spends $50k on untested, nonfunctional police software

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The Montgomery County Police Department spent thousands of dollars in taxpayer money on software that ultimately didn't work. And the department never tested the software before paying for it, *The Washington Examiner* has learned.

Police Chief Thomas Manger, in a memo to Chief Administrative Officer Tim Firestine, says the department paid $48,980 under a federal grant to a local information systems company for upgrading the county's crime-tracking database.

But after receiving the software to analyze crime statistics and spending more than two years trying to fix the program, Manger wrote that police had "no confidence" in Herndon-based ArcBridge Consulting and Training to provide effective software.

Manger also acknowledged that police spent the federal money before verifying whether the software would work.

"The vendor was paid for the new software program even though the new product had not been received and tested," Manger wrote to Firestine. "It is acknowledged that this is not an acceptable business practice, but the decision to move forward and make payment was … that the department was faced with a 'use it or lose it' scenario."

Manger told *The Examiner*,

"Crime statistics are as accurate as we were able to make them, and any variance in the crime numbers was minimal."

After reviewing the grant, County Attorney Marc Hansen wrote that ArcBridge met contract requirements and advised the county to drop any attempts to recoup the money, the document shows.

However, some Montgomery government insiders say the lost money is indicative of a lack of oversight in the grant process.

"Oftentimes, we're in such a rush to secure or use grant funds that we don't do our homework," said one county official, who asked to remain anonymous when talking about the incident. "I can only imagine how much money has been wasted on well-intentioned grants. This is just the tip of the iceberg."

The county started using an earlier version of ArcBridge's crime analysis program in 2002, but its contract with the company expired last year. Police have since turned to a new vendor for similar software that costs $27,000.

ArcBridge contends that police received what they paid for.

"It worked the way it was supposed to," said Sam Mathur, the company's chief executive officer, pointing to similar investments by the D.C. and Fairfax County governments. "They were not even aware of what [the software] was capable of. I'm not going to change the software after the payment just because they want it to do something else."